

DOE Awards \$258,387 Grant to WSU for Research Equipment

RICHLAND, Wash., May 15, 1995 -- The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Richland Operations Office has awarded a \$258,387 grant to Washington State University (WSU) for advanced research equipment that will enhance the university's research capabilities. Funding for this two-year grant comes from the DOE-Headquarters (HQ) University and Science Education Office.

The grant primarily pays for plant biochemistry equipment that could be used to improve production of alternative fuels such as ethanol. Dr. Rodney Croteau, a professor of biological chemistry at WSU, is the principal investigator for this research. He said the grant will also be used to help train students in the field of plant biochemistry. "This type of research can also aid in the production of new pharmaceutical products, agro-chemicals such as insecticides and fertilizer, and it is useful for industrial applications for enhanced adhesives and coatings," said Croteau.

Croteau said that the research could enhance the production of renewable energy resources, plant oils, and industrial lubricants. "It may be feasible to produce hydrocarbons from plants, thus limiting the use of fossil fuels which pollute the air," said Croteau.

WSU scientists plan to purchase coupled gas and liquid chromatographs and a mass spectrometer system under this grant. The chromatographs will be used to examine the size and structure of compounds, separate volatile compounds, and separate larger non-volatile compounds before they are entered into the mass spectrometer. The mass spectrometer will bombard the compounds with electrons to break them apart. Once this is done, scientists can deduce the structure of the compounds and find out other pertinent information to make new plant biochemical products.

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